

Sugar Camp ~ Makin' Maple Syrup

February 27/March 3 or March 5/10

We'll begin when the sap starts runnin'!

Is Winter dragging on and on and on? Are you fed up with hearing 'I'm bored'? Are you tired of being cooped up in the house? Are you WAY overdue for a walk in the woods? Join Kenton County Parks & Recreation for just what the doctor ordered ~ Sugar Camp ~ at Middleton-Mills Park!

Field Programs on Fowler Creek proprietor Mike Strohm will again be operating a working sugar camp, demonstrating the art and science of making maple syrup. Step back in time to experience life in the mid-1800's in a backwoods settlement sugar camp. Strohm will portray Elrod Tapper, an American pioneer settler, and will be dressed in clothing representative of the era, working with many of the tools and accoutrements used 150-200 years ago in frontier America. An 'exhibition' second camp will be set up nearby, offering participants an opportunity to help process sap water into hard sugar, using heated rocks and wooden bowls, as Shawnee and Iroquis Indians would have done in the 1700's.

Was living in 'the olden days' really a simpler time? You be the judge! Visitors are encouraged to participate in many of the Sugar Camp tasks. Gather and split wood for the fires. Learn about a spile and then help make one! Help tap Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) trees and be amazed as the sap start to run! Taste sap water straight from the tree! Carry sap-water filled buckets back to camp and pour the contents into the copper kettles boiling on the fire. You'll be amazed to discover the amount of time and effort (and hard, physical WORK!) that was devoted to obtaining maple syrup. But as you will discover, it would have been worth it because maple syrup was the only natural sweetener available at the time.

And, here's the best part: Not only will you get to taste unrefined sweet sap water, you will also sample home-made maple syrup! Hey, does it get any better than that?

With Sugar Camp operating for a full week, including a Saturday, you will also get a glimpse of what 'home' may have looked like and how some of our ancestors lived. Learn how they would have found and prepared food, and witness their day-to-day struggle to deal with the elements. You may even get to try some of the games their children might have played, and observe how greatly different our lives today are by comparison. You won't often get an opportunity like this so be sure to ask plenty of questions!

Participants will meet at Shelterhouse 2 (just follow the signs once you get to the park) and meet up with Steve Trauger, Kenton County Recreation Programs Coordinator. He will be your guide into the 'wilderness' of Middleton-Mills Park.

We will be accepting reservations for class-size groups, individuals, and families. There will be three time slots to choose from each weekday, Monday through Friday, and there is room for 30 participants in each of the groups in each time slot. Due to the limited number of hours of daylight at this time of year, the three available time slots each day are 10:00~11:30 am, 12:00~1:30 pm, and 2:00~3:30 pm. On Saturday, we won't be taking reservations so just come on out to Sugar Camp!

If Mother Nature allows, Sugar Camp will begin on Monday, February 27. But here's the thing... Because we don't actually know yet which week the sap will be running, you will need to plan accordingly. We will schedule your visit during the week of February 27 through March 2. We'll let you know either way but if the sap is not running that week, your visit will automatically be changed to the week of March 5 through March 9. For example, if you schedule your visit for Monday, February 27 in the 10:00 ~ 11:30 am time slot and the sap has not begun running, your visit will be rescheduled for Monday, March 5 in the 10:00 ~ 11:30 am time slot.

Call (859) 525-PLAY (7529) to schedule your visit today to experience the wonder of Nature at its best-tasting best! When the sap starts runnin', we'll be makin' maple syrup! It's Sugar Camp at Middleton-Mills Park!

This past year, Sugar Camp ~ Makin' Maple Syrup was awarded the Dorothy Mullen Arts & Humanities Award by the Kentucky Recreation and Park Society and the program will compete in the 2012 National Recreation & Park Association contest for national honors.

Directions: Middleton-Mills Park is easy to find! From I-275, take Exit 79 (Covington/Taylor Mill). Go south on KY 16 about 7 miles. Turn left on Mills Road. You'll see the park on the right before you get to the entrance. Turn right as you enter the park and follow signs to Sugar Camp.

Call Kenton County Recreation at (859) 525-PLAY (7529) to see how you can help ~ we are always in need of volunteers and funding sponsors for our programs!

For news of upcoming programs, activities, and events to be held in Kenton County's parks, call the Parks & Recreation office at (859) 525-PLAY (7529). Ask

about signing up for a once-a-week e-mail update of What's Happening in Kenton County's parks.